

LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

THE PROBLEM  
OF THE WEST

An Address by

Rev. Canon E. Norman Tucker, D.C.L.

General Secretary of the Missionary Society  
of the Church of England in Canada

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CANADIAN COUNCIL  
TORONTO

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## THE PROBLEM OF THE WEST.

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*"Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land."*

*—Deuteronomy, 1: 8.*

**I** WOULD endeavour very briefly and simply, as I understand it, to state the problem of our Canadian missionary field—the problem of the West—and, in order to do this, I must eliminate a very great deal that might properly come within the scope of my subject.

Leave out all those great principles that lie at the foundation of all missionary work, the Lord's last great command, "Go into all the world: make disciples of all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature." Leave out the mission and constitution of the church itself, which are essentially of a missionary character. Leave out the appalling need of the world where millions and hundreds of millions of our fellow-men are in the darkness and the shadow of death. Leave out the ample means that lie in the hands of Christian people—means in money and in agents—to carry out the Lord's command and to fulfil the essential mission of the Church. Leave out all those fundamental principles that lie as the basis of all missionary work. And, in thinking of our Canadian missionary field, leave out nine-tenths of that. You are to imagine

a region from the Ottawa river on the east 2,500 miles to the west, and then from the boundary line 2,000 miles to the north reaching the Arctic Ocean. To the north of the great lakes, Lake Huron and Lake Superior, there is the recently discovered New Ontario, one of the richest mineral regions in the world, where is Cobalt and some of the richest silver mines on the earth.

It is also a Great Forest region, where, when the trees are hewn down and the stumps rooted out, there is a great clay belt in which hundreds of thousands of settlers will find a living by and by, a region 500 miles one way and 150 miles the other—why, the size of an empire ! It is a region capable of practically doubling the population, wealth, and power of the old province of Ontario, and through it the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway is about to pass. There on all sides in the course of the next five years a score or fifty little towns will be built up, and two or three hundred farming communities grow up. It is one of the greatest missionary fields ever opened up to the enterprise of the Church. Leave that out.

Leave out a similar region to the west, reaching from the boundary line 200 miles along the Rainy River and the Lake of the Woods, a rich district—a rich mining district, a rich agricultural district, and a rich lumber district—where towns are already growing up in Fort Francis, and Emo, and Keewatin, and Kenora—one of the promising regions of the new Dominion of Canada. Leave that out.

Leave out the shores of the Hudson's Bay where, for thirty years, a marvellous missionary work has been carried on among the Indians, which is soon to become the terminus of a railway and a great outlet in the summer time for the grain trade of the West. .

The Mackenzie River runs 2,500 miles, and along its bank are mission stations known for forty or fifty years—Resolution, Simpson, Ridley, Norman, Macpherson, Herschell Island, sacred to the memory of Bishop Bompas, one of the greatest missionary heroes of the nineteenth century. Leave that out.

Leave out the basin of the Yukon, where is the Klondyke and where there is gold—the Klondyke, that El Dorado whose fame has already gone round the world.

Leave out the whole of the Pacific coast where there are logging camps and mining camps and fishing camps, one of the grandest regions of the globe, where is the great city of Vancouver, not known twenty-one years ago, now with a population of 75,000 souls, about to become one of the great commercial centres of the Dominion and of the Empire ; not to speak of her younger sister, Prince Rupert, just a few months old—with a population of, say, 300 souls to-day, 3,000 before the year is out, and 30,000 before ten years are out ; another of the great commercial centres of the future Dominion of Canada.

Leave out the Okanagan district, with a climate and a sky like those of Italy and scenery like that of Scotland;

about to become one vast orchard, 100 miles from east to west and 200 miles from north to south, containing the towns of Armstrong and Enderby and Vernon and Penticton, one of the beautiful spots of the fair Dominion.

Leave out the whole of Kootenay, where there was not a man, practically not a settler, fifteen years ago.

Leave out all the foot-hills of Alberta, the Paradise of the rancher and of the cowboy.

Leave out all the older towns of the west, Winnipeg, Brandon, Regina, Calgary; to the south, Macleod and Lethbridge; to the north, Strathcona and Edmonton. Leave all that out, and you say, "What is there left?" Enough to state this problem of the west, a new region lying to the north and west of the province of Manitoba, and to the east of the Alberta foothills.

When I went through that region five years ago there was not a town or a village or a settlement or a shack or an inhabitant—a brand-new region hundreds of miles in both directions. But about five years ago 2,500 Old-Country people assembled in the city of Liverpool, embarked on the *Lake Manitoba*, and crossed the Atlantic. They landed in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, embarked on four railway trains of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and went across the continent through New Brunswick and Quebec, through Ontario and Manitoba. They landed on the shores of the great Saskatchewan river, and pitched their tents on the brow of the hill, on which now

stands part of the city of Saskatoon. They were still 200 miles from their destination ; no railways, no highways no bridges, only the trails across the prairie. The men went with their teams and their household effects. The women and the children trudged on foot 200 miles, in mud ankle-deep and in some places knee-deep, through snowbanks and snowstorms. When they reached their destination they found one sign of civilisation alone—a wooden post driven into the prairie by the Government surveyors. Some of these men and women had been brought up within the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, in the very heart of the City of London and the other great cities of England. Now they had the blue sky over their heads, and the boundless prairie all around them ; not one single vestige of civilised life. There they pitched their tents on the site of what is now the town or city of Lloydminster, and they held their services and worshipped God under the canopy of heaven.

That was the beginning. The railways, however, had their eye upon that land of promise, and the first to compass the region was the Canadian Northern Railway, just about two years ago ; and that railway now extends from Winnipeg on the east to Edmonton on the West and beyond, a distance, by actual computation, of 827 miles, or, let us say, in round numbers, 1,000 miles, taking in the regions beyond ; 1,000 miles of railway through a brand-new region where there was not a town or a settlement three years ago. And now, by actual count on the



railway time-table, there are 125 stations between Winnipeg and Edmonton, or, say, in round numbers, 100 towns, not families, but railway towns with a station agent and telegraph operator, a post office, a blacksmith shop, and a general store, and the great elevators raising their heads towards the heavens; towns, a hundred of them along the line of that one railway between Winnipeg and Edmonton, with a population varying from 50 souls to 500, 800, and even 1,000, as in the case of Lloydminster; and, as the town lives on the country, on each side of every town, and all along this railway, little farming communities have arisen, with populations of from ten to fifty and 500 in number. Thus you have a belt 1,000 miles long, 20 to 30 miles wide, with 100 towns and 300 farming communities that did not exist three years ago along the main line of the Canadian Northern Railway, not to speak of its branch lines. Along that line are the towns Humboldt and Warman and Battleford and Lloydminster and Kitscoty and Vermillion.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is running its line parallel to the Canadian Northern through Yorkton and Sheho and Lanigan and Saskatoon and Hardisty and Wetaskiwin, as far as Edmonton. One more thousand miles long, one more twenty miles wide, one more hundred towns, one more three hundred farming communities along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway that did not exist two years ago—not to speak of branches that go in every direction.

And now comes the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, backed by the credit of the Dominion of Canada to the extent of one hundred million dollars, running its main line from Winnipeg to Edmonton through the same region, to be completed before the autumn in order that that great line of railway may take its share of the grain trade of the West. One more thousand miles, one more belt twenty miles wide, one more hundred towns, one more three hundred farming communities.

Taking the three lines together, we have in the 1,000 miles from Winnipeg to Edmonton 50 or 75 miles in depth, and three hundred towns, with 1,000 farming communities that did not exist three years ago, which have had to begin without a Church, without a parsonage, without a Sunday School, and without any means of grace in the midst of the British Empire; though the inhabitants are largely men of the English race and of English speech.

Do you begin to feel this problem of the West? We read of a quarter of a million people going into the Dominion of Canada every summer, 100,000 of these from the British Islands. They are going out into that new region. There are half a million of people there to-day who were not in those regions two or three years ago.

And we have here, it seems to me, what is absolutely unique in the history of the Empire and in the history of the world—a brand-new virgin region hundreds of miles

in extent, and previously without inhabitants. That is not to be found elsewhere on the globe to-day. Here is one of the richest grain-growing regions in the world, to be measured by hundreds and thousands of miles, capable of furnishing food for the inhabitants of Great Britain, of the Continent of Europe, and of the whole of the human families in days to come. And in that region there are three transcontinental railways worth hundreds of millions of money, with a power which is simply incalculable—the great highways of the commerce of the nations of earth; Imperial highways joining together not only the Dominion to the Motherland, but all the varied portions of the Empire itself.

I ask you to find in the history of the world anything to parallel this. It seems as though the history of our Dominion were being centred in that one spot—a history full of interest, full of romance; the French *regime* that built up one of the main pillars of our national life in the Dominion of Canada—and the English *regime*, as its foundation having the united Empire loyalists who have built up not only one of the pillars of the Dominion, but one of the pillars of the British Empire itself—culminating on the plains of Saskatchewan and the colonial and the imperial history of England finding its outlet on those far distant plains. The great seamen of the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth laid the foundation, and the glorious reign of Queen Victoria erected the superstructure;

and now, under the marvellous tact and genius of King Edward VII., that work is being completed.

And what is the lesson? There is a call to us from the Empire and the nation itself. I would have you note this—that the most important thing that man can do on this planet is what is being done in the Dominion of Canada to-day, laying the foundations of a national life. Why national life is eternal on the earth. God called Abraham and Isaac and Jacob four thousand years ago, and you can see the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on the streets of Montreal and Winnipeg to-day, with the features of Abraham and Jacob printed on their faces and on their character. St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey will become heaps of ruins, but the Jew is immortal till the Lord come. And our own Empire, a proof of the manifold power of national life, ruling all the seas, with a foothold in every port, agents among all the nations on the face of the earth—what is there in reason that the English speaking race may not accomplish to-day? And all the great deeds of Britain—battles of Waterloo, battles of Trafalgar, battle of Plassy, battles of the Plains of Abraham, foundations of Colonial Empires, foundations of Indian Empires—all the brave deeds of Englishmen, are summed up in the one little word England—in the glorious expression “English National Life.”

We are engaged in laying the foundations of a nation in the Dominion of Canada to-day ! six millions in number

now, to be sixty millions before the end of this century, please God—British in the main, under British institutions that carry with them freedom and justice wherever they go.

Can we exaggerate the magnitude of such a work as we are accomplishing in the Dominion of Canada to-day? And this national life—we never cease to repeat it—can only be built up on moral and religious grounds. It is not railways or steamers or banks or insurance companies or wheat-fields or gold mines or anything material that can give a solid and permanent foundation for national life, but it is only the old principles and the old institutions given by God Himself—the Lord's Day, the Lord's House, the Lord's Word, and the training up of the young in the faith and in the fear of God. And so the most important work that is being done in the national life of Canada to-day is the work done not by the statesmen or merchants or railway magnates, but by the humble agents of the Churches who go from town to town, and from village to village, and from shack to shack, and from mission to mission, with the love of God in their hearts, and, on their lips, the message of the life eternal.

In conclusion, we surely have here an object large enough to engage the united efforts of all earnest Christians in the Dominion of Canada, an object so fruitful in its results as to arouse the deepest enthusiasm in the hearts of all who desire the promotion of the Kingdom of

God. The appeal, as I say, comes from our own flesh and blood, our own brothers and sisters, our own sons and daughters. And, in addition to the glorious interest of the Kingdom of God, here is the very best of all means for cementing the bonds that are uniting, and that alone can unite, the varied portions of the British Empire. And the blessing will not all be theirs. The greater part of the blessing will be ours if only we rise up in this great emergency and do our duty, for "faithful is He who has promised," and the Lord Himself will fulfil His own promise, "I will open unto you the windows of heaven, and I will pour out such a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

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